

THE JOY OF ANTICIPATION



GLOUCESTER POINT BAPTIST CHURCH ADVENT
2022



Introduction to Advent

Advent is a time of joy and anticipation. It is a time to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ. The word 'advent' comes from the Latin term 'adventus' meaning 'arrival' or 'coming,' particularly the coming of something having great importance. Advent season, then, is a time of joy-filled, anticipatory celebration of the arrival of Jesus Christ. The season of Advent is a time to prepare for the coming of Jesus not only at Christmas, but also in our lives.

Advent is a time of both hope and repentance. We hope for the coming of Jesus Christ, but we also remember that Jesus will come again one day to judge the living and the dead. We must be prepared for his coming, both now and in the future.



Advent Wreath - Lighting an Advent wreath is a custom that began by Christians in 16th-century Germany. Typically, the Advent wreath is a garland with four or five candles arranged on the wreath. During Advent, one candle is lit each Sunday as a part of the corporate Advent services.

The traditional structure involves three purple candles and one pink candle, set in a wreath, and often with a single, larger white candle in the center. One more candle is lit each week of Advent culminating with the lighting of the white Christ candle.

The advent candles and their colors are packed with rich meaning. Each represents a specific aspect of the spiritual preparations for Christmas. The three main colors are purple, pink, and white. Purple symbolizes repentance and royalty. Pink represents joy and rejoicing. And white stands for the purity and light of Christ.

*Cover Art: "The Joy of Anticipation"
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HOPE



Jesus said, I am the light of the world; 'he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' - John 8:12

The first candle lit on the Advent wreath reminds us of the light of **HOPE** that the prophets had in their expectation of a Messiah who would bring peace and love to the world.

Sunday, November 27

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel. —Isaiah 7:14

As a child, my family would travel to Kentucky to visit my grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. We didn't get to see them often, so each year as summer got closer, my excitement grew in anticipation for this trip. It was a long trip, so as we travelled it was fun for me to see and read the signs for the rivers, bridges, and towns we would pass. It was a big deal to see the "Welcome to West Virginia" sign, and then, a while later, it was really exciting to see "Welcome to Kentucky". Even though we still had many more miles to travel, I knew we were getting closer. The excitement and anticipation grew as we got closer to my grandparents' home. The signs we saw along the way marked our journey and let us know how close we were to reaching our destination.

Signs are all around us. We see signs on roadways and buildings. We see signs in nature to mark the seasons and weather. Sometimes a sign comes to us through a conversation with a friend.

Isaiah's message to the people told of a message of HOPE. This special sign from God would be the Savior they had been promised. God keeps his promises! God sent Jesus to earth. Jesus lived and died for our sins. As Christians on this journey through life, we have Hope as we anticipate the return of Jesus. We know God keeps His promises, and we know how close we are to reaching our destination of eternal life with Him.

Donna Phillips

Monday, November 28

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.*

...

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.

*And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of
Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.*

*He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with
justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.*

The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

-Isaiah 9:2-7

The Jews had already been heavily afflicted by the Assyrian Tiglath-pileser and more so by his successor Shalmaneser. Isaiah reminded them that they will suffer further certain and longer lasting destruction as God had commanded. (This prophecy will be fulfilled in due time by the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar.) Isaiah begins to alleviate their fear by speaking of a “great light” bringing life and hope in the future! In these few verses he carries them from terror to hope as he describes gaining a larger kingdom, reaping full harvests, and winning victories over their enemies. Isaiah mentions Midian as a caution that the victories of the past were at the hand of God alone, and that He is the one ending the wars, not the people.

It's remarkable how we can be carried from despair to hope and joy so quickly, and to be assured that we will reap rewards unimaginable. God's determination to redeem his people is reflected in Matthew's note that the “rays of light” extended to Galilee, and Paul's quotation from Hosea “I will call them my people which were not my people”. Christ's light thus extends far beyond the small remnant of Jews, to all nations, for all time, and embraces us in full salvation and joy for eternity!

All of this will be accomplished by God's gift of his Son to all people. What He will be and what rank He will achieve are described in His titles. Wonderful Counsellor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. His government will extend through eternity. Anticipate that!

Gordon Smith

Tuesday, November 29

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord ... and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge ...

... The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. ... The infant will play near the cobra's den and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. ... Isaiah 11:1-9

At Christmas, we celebrate when Jesus came to rescue us from sin. Yet it didn't happen the way people expected. When they pictured a messiah, they pictured a great king, to save them and destroy their enemies. But God's first priority was saving people's souls. So, Jesus came humbly on that first Christmas on a mission of sacrifice.

And because of what He did, we have a Savior to restore our relationship with God if we just accept His gift. Those who did not recognize Him, did not understand God's plan. It was even bigger than they thought. God promised a redemption that would be complete, but it would not happen all at once.

The first time, Jesus came to rescue us spiritually. But physically, we're still in enemy territory. We live in a fallen, evil world, where people, and animals, suffer. Isaiah 11 is about God's second rescue, the one that's still to come, when Jesus will return again!

It's the promise of the Millennium. Jesus will return to Earth, but this time, it really will be as King. He will fight for Earth, remove the enemy, and win back His creation. Then God tells us He'll restore everything like new. Jesus Himself will be our Ruler and teacher for 1000 years. During that time, Satan will be removed and bound, so he cannot interfere, and so that we can love, and learn, the way we were meant to. Even the animals will be changed. Snakes, lions, and wolves will live with lambs, cows, and people. Animals will be restored to their original purpose, so they can live with us peacefully, as companions, and even little children will be safe with them. Life on Earth will be wonderful, in a world fully transformed into Eden-like perfection, with no sickness, no death, no danger, no fear...

The Bible has so much more to say about the Millennium. It's mentioned more than any other prophesy, so there's a lot to learn. But when the world around us gets discouraging, it helps just to understand that God isn't done, His plan is good. He promises Victory for those who trust in Him. For Christians, His message is one of love, comfort, and hope.

Judy Kissinger

Wednesday, November 30

*I will sing of the Lord's great love forever;
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.*

*I will declare that your love stands firm forever,
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.*

You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one,

I have sworn to David my servant,

'I will establish your line forever

and make your throne firm through all generations.'" - Psalm 89:1-4

I moved to Gloucester Point Virginia in May 2016 to live with my daughter her husband and three children and grandson. My wife died in 2012 and I was trying to find something that would fill that void. I made a lot of mistakes and bad choices. The first thing I did when I moved in with my daughter was to try to find people my age to associate with and make friends. I made the same bad decisions I had made in Florida. I went to local bars and realized this is not what I wanted.

In August I had an idea, maybe I could meet people like myself in church. So I found Gloucester Point Baptist Church and something miraculous happened, when I walked through those doors I was met by people who welcomed me and made me feel welcome. They were faithful to the Lord and showed me Christian love. They put a "seed" in my heart and mind. I had never belonged to a church before and never had been baptized. I stepped forward during the hymn of invitation on September the 4th and asked to join the church and be baptized in Christ. I was baptized September 18th, 2016, at the age of 65. My life has changed forever.

Since that time, I became a regular at the church, go to Bible study, became a member of men's fellowship, attend Sunday school, became a substitute teacher, joined the choir, belong to some committees and finally was made a Deacon. I have become a servant of our Lord Jesus Christ. My life has changed for the better because of the mercy of our Lord. I am by no means a perfect person. I still make mistakes but, I know that Jesus is holding me in his arms.

As I study the Word, I find I speak of the Lord more than I ever have before. I stand and profess my love of Jesus and am not ashamed to bring the Word to others. God bless you all in this season of advent and forever.

Barry Milligan

Thursday, December 1

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord,
“when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch,
a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.
In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety.
This is the name by which he will be called:
The Lord Our Righteous Savior.” –*Jeremiah 23:5-6*

I remember Christmas with my Mother. She liked Bible word puzzles and ribbon candy. She would hang the stockings on the fireplace and bake preacher cookies. She loved to bake and would make cakes and pies and then give them to neighbors and friends. She would even take preacher cookies to a clerk at Food Lion.

One of her favorite hymns was Amazing Grace.

Now Christmas is different, but I know she was saved and we’re going to live forever in heaven with Jesus. Our Lord is a Righteous Savior!

Merry Christmas,
Donna Hogge

(Note: Preacher cookies were so named because in the Appalachian Mountains, when the housewife saw the preacher coming on horseback, she could prepare these cookies so quickly that they would be cooling by the time the preacher entered the home.)

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Such a Time as This

Rise up my people-following the example of Jesus...It’s time to build a masterpiece in the church, in our families lives, in our own personal life... moving forward with prayer, love, faith, hope, with patience, persistence, perseverance...one step, one wave, one choice at a time...always keeping focus, with full expectancy that victory will shine forth, trusting others will be influenced and find hope...To God be all honor, glory, and praise.

Love and prayers,
Alise Freeman

Friday, December 2

*Marshal your troops now, city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod. "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And **he will be our peace** when the Assyrians invade our land and march through our fortresses. - Micah 5:1-5a*

A Promise of Hope and Joy

The prophet Micah began sharing his messages warning of destruction and of captivity to the land of Judah over 700 years before the birth of Christ. While his words of judgement are harsh, he does not end his prophecy without assuring the people of Israel that there is Hope in the coming promise of the Messiah. It is Micah who proclaims that the birth of Christ would take place in the small town of Bethlehem; "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times" (Micah 5:2). Micah's words surely brought promise and a sense of anticipation to the captive and oppressed people of Israel. Micah's prophesy would be fulfilled over 700 years later on the night that Jesus was born.

Today, we anxiously anticipate the Christmas Season. We decorate and make plans. We look forward to spending time with our family and friends. Young children eagerly wait to open gifts that are under the tree. But as we await Christmas Day and the celebration of the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, let us not forget the words of promise that Micah spoke to the captive people of Israel long ago. We too can leave behind the captivity of our sin and find joy and the promise of eternal life through that tiny baby born in Bethlehem, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Merry Christmas,
The Hutson Family

Saturday, December 3

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.

It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions,
and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,
while we wait for the blessed hope—
the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

-Titus 2:11-13

If you had been able to stand before the baby Jesus in the stable with the shepherds, and had known what the Bible says of Him from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, how would you have felt at that moment?

Would you call that feeling? Hope?

Some of the people that we encounter as we’re going about our daily activities are living lives with no hope. Each situation is different, but God knows them all. We carry the knowledge and the message of undeserved Grace & Hope- eternal with us everywhere we go. That is why we are “lights” and “salt” in this world.

If our lives shine a light, instead, for the latest Hollywood sensation or political upheaval or ungodly joke, then we may lack spiritual maturity and be unusable “salt” or covered “lights”.

As we seek God’s Hope in our own lives, let’s also allow the Holy Spirit to teach us, lead us, and train us. Then we will gain maturity in The Truth and The Hope (Lord Jesus) so that we live in the way of spreading that Hope to all around us.

Then one day when we do stand before Christ knowing what the Bible said about Him, He can say to us, “Well done good and faithful servant!”

Margaret Sarratori

Peace



Jesus said, I am the light of the world; 'he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' - John 8:12

This first candle reminds us of the light of **HOPE** of the prophets.

The second candle reminds us of the light of **PEACE** God offers us in Christ Jesus.

We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. - Romans 5:1
Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. - John 14:27
He is our peace. - Ephesians 2:14

Sunday, December 4

*The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,
as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" – Mark 1:1-3*

Mark's theme is telling the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. His purpose is to emphasize the servant role of Jesus. He draws from two Old Testament books to show that one would come before Jesus as a 'messenger' calling the people to repentance. Malachi 3:1 & Isaiah 40:3 were fulfilled prophecies with John the Baptist as the "messenger" and "the voice of one crying in the wilderness". Mark's gospel shows that John the Baptist carried out his mission by telling the people to repent of their sins and then baptizing them.

The Christian life begins by accepting Jesus as their Savior and following through with water baptism. We, as Christians are to be a messenger for Jesus today. My Christian life began at an early age, but over the years I was not always faithful to Jesus. After marriage, Travis and I became involved in church and began to use our Spiritual Gifts to serve Him. As we grew older, life began to change. We knew we would not be able to take care of ourselves very long, especially after I had two heart attacks. Our son, Tommy, bought a house in Gloucester and invited us to live with him. Just when things were going along fine, Travis fell and broke his femur and then had a heart attack. As he was getting better, I fell flat of my face with my two front teeth going through my top lip.

AGAIN, God was faithful in seeing me through another episode. Right after I fell, a young lady walked up and said "I am a nurse & paramedic, can I help you?" She took charge, calling the ambulance and getting me loaded to be taken to Walter Reed. Emergency Room staff were wonderful, but felt like I needed to see a specialist, regarding my teeth. They transferred me to Sentara/Norfolk General. I spent the night there, getting reevaluated all over again. After the last exam, they rolled me in a room and left me for hours, before a male nurse asked if there was anything else I needed. I asked, "Do you know Jesus as your Savior"? He responded, "I believe in God, but I don't know Jesus personally." I asked, "Would you like to know about Jesus.?" He propped his arms on the railing of my bed and answered. "I am going to take a break and you can share about Jesus."

I began with John 3:16, sharing that God loves him already. The verses that I learned in the faith class began to come to me as I shared with him. As I finished he stated that was a lot for him to take in at this time. He wanted to think about it for awhile before he made a decision. He stated that he had a Bible. I suggested that he read the book of John to see how much Jesus loves him. I prayed for him asking the Holy Spirit to help him make a decision. Before he left my room, I told him that I believed God sent me there just to witness to him. He responded that it may be so. Oh, what JOY filled my heart, knowing that one more person knows about Jesus, and at the right time will make a decision to follow Him. My job was done, I was His messenger.

Catherine Asbell

Monday, December 5

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years. “So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,” says the LORD Almighty. “I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. – Malachi 3:1-6

Who can endure the *day* of his coming? Jesus brings serenity, **PEACE** on earth, goodwill to all. The Peace Candle is a reminder that the Christ-child will bring peace to a troubled world. That is good news to our ears. World and national events speak to us of discord and conflict.

Galatians 5:22-23. Peace is knowing that the Lord of the universe is by your side and resting in that. It's not just knowing, but it is also living it out. Peace is sitting in comfort and knowing that God is next to your side no matter what.

I have come to have more Peace in my daily living than I did in the past. I have learned through Scriptures, Sunday School and Worship that EVERYTHING is God's timing and I pray daily that God's will be done through me. Knowing that God is working in me everyday I know that if I pray for something and it doesn't happen it's for my best interest and God is keeping me safe in what He gives/does not give to me. When unforeseen circumstances happen I try to find the Peace in it that everything happens/doesn't happen for a reason. Sometimes later we find the reason BUT often we just have to accept God's will.

Philippians 4:7 “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,
Jamie Moore

Tuesday, December 6

But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous— to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” - Luke 1:13-17

Thanksgiving is upon us, and my husband and I are planning a gathering with my family like we do every year. However, my preparations during the holiday seasons often leave me overconfident and lacking in preparation. I think most would agree preparation is important. For example, if you wanted to do well on a test you would study. Then you turn on the television and you see holiday decorations and lights. Retailers go out of their way each year to convince us to prepare for the holiday spirit.

So, I reflect and think what are we as Christians doing to prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Christ. Luke's account gives us the opportunity to start this Christmas season thinking about Zechariah and Elizabeth. It provides us the details and events leading to Jesus's birth.

My husband and I reviewed the passages regarding this old couple described as righteous, blameless and faithful. We reflect on the dark days they faced but stayed the course. I pray this advent season that God gives us deep faith, joy and peace in knowing that He has a plan and purpose for us all. We must trust the process.

Tammy Greggs

Wednesday, December 7

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said,

"Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus."

– Luke 1:26-31

Elizabeth told Mary, "Blessed are you among women."

We as Christian's use that word "Blessed" so very often. We use it to describe if we feel lucky to have something: good health, love, family, security, a job, a home. I have even heard someone explain how blessed they are to have a special talent.

Blessings can be a special favor, mercy or a benefit. We as Americans say we are blessed to have liberty.

There are so many definitions of Blessings.

In our Bible verse today, pregnant Elizabeth was so excited to see Mary that the baby leaped in her womb. Elizabeth already knew the Blessing Mary was going to have.

The Bible doesn't tell us why Mary "hurried" to another town to see Elizabeth. In verse 40 we are told Mary entered Zechariah's house; Mary knew she would be welcomed. I discovered the word "house" means "go in", "spend the night", "find safety from the dangers of the dark". We know that Jesus said, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me". The word "house" is found in the Bible more than 1,700 times.

Mary must have known she would be welcomed in the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth and she felt blessed to be able to share her wonderful news.

We often contact family and friends when we have good news to share. We also contact those same people when we need encouragement or someone to listen. That simple act is such a blessing.

We receive blessings everyday, some are small unnoticed and some are so large it takes our breath away. During all of these events in our life we must acknowledge where those blessings are coming from. We must be thankful for them and use each and every blessing to glorify our Heavenly Father who gave us His son.

Wishing my church family a Blessed and Happy Christmas.

Sonya Anthony

Thursday, December 8

*He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.
The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,
and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever;
His kingdom will never end. -Luke 1: 32-33*

These beloved verses describe different details about the Messiah's first Advent. They tell of His greatness, whose Son He is, whose throne He will inherit, and the blessedness of knowing that He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and that His kingdom will never end.

When I first became a Christian at age 21, Christmas took on an entirely new meaning to me. Although I knew something of the true meaning of Christmas before surrendering my life to Jesus, it became so much clearer and significant after I was born again. The Spirit of God was now living inside of me and revealing how worthy and awesome the Son of God is, and the magnitude of His Incarnation. He was in truth, Emanuel, God with us. How personal, how glorious!

The magnitude and reach of God's love is beautifully revealed through the Christmas story. His mercy and His Kingdom are now available to everyone on this earth – to Jews and Gentiles alike. With humility and thanksgiving, let us trust and serve the Lord with gladness as we abide in Him and enjoy sweet fellowship with Him. As we do, He will inspire, guide, and enable us to bear much fruit as we await His second Advent!

Have a joyous Christmas!
David and Angie Crummett

Friday, December 9

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. - Luke 1: 34-35

Mary was a young woman expecting to be married soon. However, instead of joyfully planning her marriage God gave her a plan beyond her imagination that brought her eternal joy.

When Mary asked the question, "How will this be", was she expressing doubt? I don't believe so. I feel that she was expressing surprise and bewilderment. The angel understood her emotions and explained God's plan for Mary.

Think about how this message would or could affect Mary's life. If she said yes, her future marriage would be jeopardized. Her social standing and credibility would be ruined. This announcement could cost her every dream and plan she had for her life. But if she said yes to God, it would forever change the world.

God already knew Mary's heart, or He would not have chosen her. So, because of her faith she had peace with the angel's message and the uncertainty of her future.

Doesn't the same hold true for us today? We face uncertainty daily in our lives but as long as we accept God's message and live obediently to Him, then we also will have peace in our hearts.

Merry Christmas Everyone
Martha West

Saturday, December 10

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear!"

– Luke 1:39-42

The Joy of Anticipation.

What things or times do we Joyfully anticipate? As a child I was excited about many things and most of them were childish things. Some of those things could be: starting school for the first time, loosing a tooth and let's not forget Christmas. A child gets very excited about the Christmas season. As we grow and hopefully mature, we are joyful about other things. Our secular world would have you believe that we should be excited about a great job, new car, lots of money or a new shirt. But these things are temporary and will only leave us feeling less excited and sometimes even hurt. We know that there is only one thing that lasts forever and embodies all JOY.

Christians that truly believe are all in great anticipation for this Joy. The day that Jesus returns to take us home for eternal life with HIM. This Joy never goes away or leaves us feeling let down. This Joy surpasses all other types of joy and, therefore, we are in anticipation. We are sometimes like a young child in this; we can't wait but God tells us to keep on living our life. But this doesn't lessen the anticipation of what is coming.

Elizabeth wanted a child more than anything. Maybe even more than life itself. She and Zechariah were overjoyed with the anticipation of finally having a child, and a son at that. All their anticipated joy of becoming parents was forgotten when Mary came to visit. I think that Elizabeth realized that her new joy, as great as it was, was only temporary and that she was in the presence of the pure and true joy of her Savior.

During this Christmas season let's celebrate the Joy that Jesus brings to each of us that will never go away or become dull. We should all be anticipating the Joy of having an eternal life with our risen Savior.

Stewart Wood

Joy



Jesus said, I am the light of the world; 'he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' - John 8:12

This first candle reminds us of the light of **HOPE** of the prophets.

The second candle reminds us of the light of **PEACE** God offers us in Christ Jesus.

The third candle is a symbol of the great light and **JOY** which surrounded the shepherds at the announcement of Jesus' birth.

Sunday, December 11

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said,

“No! He is to be called John.”

They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.” Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, “His name is John.” Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. ... Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, “What then is this child going to be?” For the Lord’s hand was with him. - Luke 1: 57-66

Can you imagine the feeling of intense joy Elizabeth and Zechariah felt when their precious son John was born? The son they thought they would never have? God answered their prayer for a child and not just any child, but one filled with the Holy Spirit from birth.

Joy is defined as a feeling of great pleasure and happiness. Christian joy can also be defined as a state of being more than an emotion or a good feeling in the soul produced by the Holy Spirit. Christ loves us completely and His love never fails. He provided our salvation and we will live with Him forever. What could bring us more joy than that!

This Christmas season may we think about all the moments in our lives that have brought us joy. Then let’s share that joy along with acts of kindness and love with others.

Merry Christmas and a Happy, Blessed New Year!

Denise and Stan Gandee

Monday, December 12

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

*“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.*

*He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David.*

- Luke 1:67-69

There’s nothing quite like the joy of a newborn baby and the birth of Zechariah’s son inspired the words found in this scripture.

The angel Gabriel appears to Zechariah to tell him that he and his wife Elizabeth will conceive a son and they are to name the child John. John will be a forerunner of the Messiah as prophesied by Isaiah to prepare people for the coming of the Lord. Zechariah does not believe the angel because he and Elizabeth are past the age of having children. Because of his doubt Gabriel renders him mute until the time John is born. At the baby’s circumcision, neighbors and relatives thought they were going to name him after his father Zechariah. But when Zechariah, still unable to speak, wrote down that his name was to be John, immediately his mouth opened and he was able to speak. Enabled by the Holy Spirit, Zechariah’s first words were praises to God for what He will do. He will redeem Israel and through a strong and mighty savior provide salvation to his people.

Thank you, God for our savior Jesus. As we celebrate his birth this advent season let our joy be renewed as we reflect on this ultimate gift of God’s love.

Wishing you a joyous Christmas,
Jeannie Barrera

Tuesday, December 13

*This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:
Abraham was the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ...
and Jesse the father of King David. ...
and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus
who is called the Messiah. – Matthew 1:1-17*

God is not silent. He speaks to His people. In the Garden He walked with Adam and Eve. After the Fall, God spoke through signs, wonders, stories, and prophets. From a burning bush to a man robed in camel's hair, God continued to speak. From a donkey to educated men to a shepherd and a fruit-picker, we learn that God does not leave His people alone.

These signs, wonders, and prophets speak the word of God, the gospel of the coming Christ. Each repeats the message heard from the beginning that a victor would arise to crush the serpent. With Moses this repetition took the form of, "The LORD God of your fathers . . . will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt . . . unto a land flowing with milk and honey . . . and, you shall not go empty." Isaiah declared that "unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." Standing on the shoulders of these men, John the Baptist linked their words to Jesus. He prepared the way of the Lord by calling Israel to "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is near." Jesus, he declared, was the mighty victor—one so mighty that John felt unworthy to even untie His shoes.

God still speaks. To that of the prophets God adds the voice of his Son. Jesus repeats and then fulfils their words—a messenger better by far. Let us rejoice in the Advent prophecies for they stand fulfilled. And as Jesus goes forth victoriously, let us heed the Father's command:

*"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; **hear Him.**"*

Ted and Carol Fisher (2011)

Wednesday, December 14

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." – Matthew 1:18-21

What God has told us in the Holy Bible, the parables, the laws, the Trinity, was true from the beginning of time and will be true when Jesus returns. These verses tell us of Joseph's love and faith in God and Mary and his trust in God's plan for his life. Did Joseph or Mary truly understand that this child would save all of God's people from their sins? Probably not before Jesus' birth.

How often in these times do families break apart? How many children's lives are stopped before it starts? These verses describe true faith and love of God, belief in family and hope for life with God forever because we can be made sinless through one small child. What wonderful joy a child brings to a family and what wonderful potential each child possesses. Jesus is the fulfillment of the ultimate potential of man and unlimited love of God.

During this season, as we celebrate the arrival of our Lord and Savior, consider all the children you contact daily, your influence on them and their potential in the world. Who will discover the cure for cancer, perhaps your neighbor's new baby. What child today may lead nations out of war in the future? Joseph listened and obeyed God's will and countless souls were saved from eternal damnation through Jesus Christ. Speak to God constantly, listening carefully to what He says. If you do, you can be part of God's plan, changing the world one small step at a time.

Mike & Emma Crawford

Thursday, December 15

*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:
“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”
(which means “God with us”). When Joseph woke up,
he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.
But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son.
And he gave him the name Jesus. —Matthew 1:22-25*

In this verse, Joseph provides a powerful example of obedience and unconditional love. When faced with a tough choice when he woke up from the dream: continue with the divorce or listen to the angel, he chose to be obedient to the Lord.

We see later in scripture that once Jesus was born, Joseph was visited by an angel two more times. In Matthew 2:13-15, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in another dream, telling him to leave and flee to Egypt, that Herod is searching for the child and wants to kill him. And again, Matthew 2:19-20 reads: *“After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.’”* Joseph again proves faithful and obedient to the Lord.

Joseph was obedient even when he didn’t understand or know the entire picture. He trusted the Lord each step of the way. This is how we should live our lives, in constant communion with the Lord, seeking his wisdom and being obedient even when we don’t understand. It is easy to be obedient when we understand, like don’t touch that, it is hot or don’t eat that, it will make you sick. But it becomes harder when we don’t have all the answers.

It is obvious that before Joseph was tasked with being Jesus’ father, he was a righteous man and had proved himself faithful and obedient throughout his life, through small and big things. Just like Joseph, we need to be obedient in the small things so that when we face tough choices or challenging times it will be easier to remain obedient and faithful to God.

Because of Joseph’s obedience, he played a vital role in fulfilling God prophecy. It is recorded in Isaiah 7:14 *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.”* Joseph’s testimony in the Bible is for us to learn from today, like Joseph we are also playing a vital role in fulfilling God’s prophecy, Joseph has handed us the baton. We are to run the race from here and through obedience in our lives we will write the next chapters. It’s exciting to see how God will use our obedience even when we don’t see the entire picture. I pray that this Christmas season you will seek the Lord, search your heart, and surrender in obedience to him.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
Jay and Paige Bond

Friday, December 16

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. - Luke 2:1:7

It never ceases to amaze me how God works throughout the Bible and in our lives today. The day that I received my Advent scripture, Luke 2:1-7, my Bible chapter of the day was I Chronicles 21. In that chapter, David seemingly wavered in his faith and took a census of all the fighting men in Israel. Instead of trusting in God for all Israel's victories over their enemies, David trusted in numerical superiority. He immediately regretted his decision and was filled with shame.

In Luke 2 we see that Caesar Augustus also took a census. This time it was a census for everyone within the rule of the Roman Empire, thus sending Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem where Jesus would be born. The census David took was under the influence of Satan, but the census from Caesar Augustus was ordained by God to fulfill a prophesy from the Old Testament. Here, we contrast two men in power making the same decision, but under the influence of polar opposite forces.

We can learn many things from these passages, but mostly that God has a plan and is in control, even in the seemingly random and mundane decisions we make every day. As we see in the Bible, a cumulation of these decisions not only led to some amazing stories that we can study and analyze, but also to the birth of our Savior in a way that no one but God could have manufactured.

This Christmas, let us remember how our omnipotent God is in control of both the large and small things in our lives. He works all things for the good of those who love Him, even creating a way for us to be united with Him eternally through His Son.

Merry Christmas!
Seth Gandee

Saturday, December 17

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." - Luke 2:8-12

Are we there yet? Over the years, our family has made many a journey for vacations or to visit destinations and friends. Some were fairly long journeys. A common statement echoed periodically by the children was "are we there yet?" or "how much longer?" It would be hard to say whether the question was out of the excitement to arrive or the boredom of travel: perhaps a combination of both. Of all the trips we ever made, none could ever compare to traveling on the back of a donkey while near full term pregnant. I don't think I can even imagine that, but I can certainly imagine that Mary and Joseph inwardly asked those same questions.

The Advent candle this week in our journey of joy has been called the shepherd's candle or the Bethlehem candle. Having never heard an angel speak, I can understand the shepherds' immediate reaction of fear but then think of the joy they felt at being the first witnesses to the birth of our Savior. I love Nativity Sets and am always struck by the reverence depicted in the characters. Their joy is expressed through their silent witness and awe at the miracle before them. How could this small baby be the Messiah, their Lord? Their anticipation as they went to the place the angel spoke of must have been so amazing.

We aren't there yet. The Advent is not yet complete but, just as the shepherds spread the word of what they witnessed and glorified God, so should we on this amazing journey. We anticipate the joy of our Savior's birth.

Debra Wood

Love



Jesus said, I am the light of the world; 'he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' - John 8:12

This first candle reminds us of the light of **HOPE** of the prophets.

The second candle reminds us of the light of **PEACE** God offers us in Christ Jesus.

The third candle is a symbol of the great light and **JOY** which surrounded the shepherds at the announcement of Jesus' birth.

The fourth candle reminds us of the tremendous **LOVE** that God has for each of us.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should have everlasting life. - John 3:16

Sunday, December 18

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." - Luke 2:13-14

Some of the Jews were waiting for a savior to deliver them from Roman rule, others hoped the Christ (Messiah) would deliver them from physical ailments. But Jesus, while healing their illnesses and establishing a spiritual kingdom delivered them from sin.

Christ's work is far more reaching than anyone could imagine. Christ paid the price for sin and opened the way to love, hope, peace, joy, reconciliation, and eternity with God. The only way to accomplish this was by giving His life for us. The shedding of His blood was the ultimate and final blood sacrifice required for God's children so that they could have a relationship with Him. All relationships require communication, spending time together, learning about each other, and loving one another. Our relationship with God is the same. We should strive to live our life so that it is pleasing to God.

Every day we awake with the assurance and anticipation that Jesus will meet our every need. He draws us closer each day because of His love for us. God's children have a joyful heart because we receive His blessings and know that they will never end.

But what about God's anticipation of us? He is in heaven just waiting for us to praise Him, to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, to spend time daily with Him, to share His love with others.

As we will soon celebrate Christ's birthday may we remember why He came. He came and paid the price for the sins of all people, past, present, and future. This is a gift freely given by God. All that is required of us is to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Merry Christmas and a Happy blessed New Year to all.

In Christ's love
Al West

Monday, December 19

*When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,
“Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened,
which the Lord has told us about.”*

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. – Luke 2:15-20

An angel appeared to the shepherds to tell them about the birth of Jesus. They had great expectations, and they wanted to see for themselves. They said, “Let’s go and see this thing that has happened.” They hurried to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. It was just as the angel said. They were not disappointed as they witnessed Mary and Joseph gathered around the newborn baby. Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. The scriptures say that Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. She must have been reflecting on what had happened. She probably remembered what the angel had told her. “Fear not, for I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. Her Son was to be the Savior of the world. The shepherds were filled with joy, and they wanted to tell everyone what they had witnessed. They returned to their flocks to glorify and praise God.

We had always heard people talk about the Biblical productions at Sight and Sound. We wanted to go and see it for ourselves. Our expectations were high because of everything we had heard from others. This year the cast told a beautiful story of *David*. We witnessed the outstanding cast of singers and the trained animals such as camels, goats, and horses that walk up on stage as if human and knew exactly what to do. It is amazing to see the panoramic scenery and how it can seamlessly change right before your eyes. The Biblical production had been just as we were told. When we left, we reflected on what we had seen. We had a renewed understanding of David and felt very close to God. As the shepherds wanted to share what they had witnessed, we too wanted to share with others about this uplifting Biblical production.

Bud and Donna Goude

Tuesday, December 20

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." – Luke 2:25-35

There is a difference between wishing and hope. When we wish for something, it means that we want something, but we have expectation that we will get what we wish for. On the other hand, when we hope for something, we fully expect to get what we desire. Hope requires faith and patience.

Jesus is our hope because He is the fulfillment of what the prophets had foretold. Jesus is our hope because of His ability to keep His promise. Jesus is our hope because He died on the cross for sin. His death is sufficient for forgiveness of sin. In Him we are reconciled to the Father. Jesus is our hope because in Him we have eternal life.

Our hope this Christmas is that we will all take time to spread the message of hope that the Christ Child brings to us. Let us not forget that God always keeps his promises.

God bless you and your families as we celebrate the birth of our Lord.

Buddy and Ann Hogge

Wednesday, December 21

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

– Luke 2:36-38

Who was this Anna, a woman in the temple who was so obedient and faithful unto our Lord that she worshiped night and day through fasting and prayer? She is named as a prophet, a widow of many decades, from the tribe of Asher – one of ten lost tribes of northern Israel after Assyrian forced displacement in 721 BC. How was it this *woman*, from a tribe long before assimilated into other peoples, who was without a husband, could be the very first proclaimer of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel?! Recall, women of that day could not testify in court, could not pray in public at the temple - were essentially to be seen and not heard.

Anna's sincere obedience and deep prayerful faith was cherished and abundantly rewarded by God in that He ordained this humble servant, old Anna, would recognize the young baby Jesus amongst others in the crowded temple and *know* she was in the presence of our Mighty King. And you know what – she testified the testimony since heard around the world – this Child is the promised redemption of Jerusalem.

May Christmas 2022 be a blessing to this church, our families and the nation. May we all be called to testify of our faith and salvation as we patiently await the return of the New Jerusalem.

Merry Christmas,
Amy Jacobson

Thursday, December 22

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy. ¹⁹For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, ²⁰and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.

- Colossians 1:15-20

This passage is a VERY IMPORTANT description of our Lord Jesus Christ! Now read it again and bask in Christ's divine nature. He is the image of the invisible God. Christ created everything. Jesus holds all things together. He is the head of the church. Christ reconciled all of us by His death on the cross. Our Lord is the beginning.

This passage takes the time to explain each definition made. In verse 15 our invisible God is defined as the firstborn over all creation. Now look at Christ's creation, described in detail, in verse 16. Explanations continue throughout.

Notice Jesus is the image of the invisible God. He is before all things (verse 17). He is the beginning and the firstborn (verse 18). Does this remind you of John 1:1? "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*"

We see the equalness of Christ and God several times here. In verse 18, Christ is the beginning and has the supremacy. All God's fullness dwelt in Jesus and God used Jesus to reconcile us to Him. This reminds us of John 1:1: "*The Word was God*".

As we celebrate Christmas let us rejoice with Joy as we welcome God's peace and anticipate God choosing our new pastor in 2023 at G.P.B.C.

God's LOVE to you all –
Linda Breaks

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. —John 1:1-5

When you go into a dark room and turn the light on it banishes the darkness. I think that is a good example of when someone becomes a Christian - they anticipate what it will be like for the Son to be in their lives. Those who live in darkness have little to anticipate in life - even though the sun shines on them the Son does not dwell in them. Those who live in darkness do not believe He made everything and are sadly lacking in any beliefs.

Anyone who can look out a window and see the leaves turn into their Fall colors, watch the clouds scudding across the sky, or look at the perfection of a new baby and not believe there is one Creator that does all these things is lacking in any kind of faith. What could they possibly have in their lives that they can't imagine our Eternal Home in Heaven. So many people believe we are born, live, and die, and that's it. What a sad commentary. The World is colored - not in darkness - but in rainbows of hope for our future.

Blessings and prayers to everyone for the Holiday Season.

In His Name -
Barbara Fryer

Christmas Eve

Saturday, December 24

*The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.
He was in the world, and though the world was made through him,
the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own,
but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him,
to those who believed in his name,
he gave the right to become children of God. - John 1:9-12*

Deep in the pages of the Old Testament, stands an icon of promise and grace. As it is examined, the true treasure of this image becomes beautifully illustrated. It is the Tabernacle of Moses described in *Exodus*. Now, I know what you are thinking..."What does the Tabernacle have to do with Christmas?" Well, I'm glad you asked!

The Outer Courts of the Tabernacle represent our beginning relationship with God. We come to Jesus at the Altar of Sacrifice, asking forgiveness for our sins. We come as we are. He meets us there and makes us new.

The central section was called The Holy Place. The materials used in the room were specifically chosen to represent God's deity and holiness. This chamber represents His Church. In it, there were only three pieces of furniture:

- The Table of Shewbread, signifying the breaking of bread and fellowship within the church (**In-reach**)
- The Altar of Incense, signifying the sweet wafting of our prayer up to the Lord (**Up-reach**), and
- The Golden Lampstand, which shattered the darkness. (**Outreach**) *Exodus 25, 27*

Let's focus on this symbol of light. The Lampstand was the only light in the room, constantly burning and made from gold. The Levites would carefully trim the wicks and change the pure oil everyday.

John 1:9 declares Jesus as the true Light of the World. Like John the Baptist (*verse 8*), we are not the light, but we bear witness to the Light.

Dear ones, we are the Lampstand! Our quest is to carry the Light of the World. When the singed blackness of sin impedes our flame, it must be cut away. We are carefully trimmed daily by the Word of God. We are also filled with the pure oil of the Holy Spirit. He fuels us to keep Christ's light burning in our hearts. He gives us boldness and wisdom, empowering us to illuminate the world with His perfect love.

All who believe in His name and receive Him, become His children. (*verse 12*) We are granted all rights, privileges and responsibilities as His offspring. We are children of the Light. As we know Him more, He reveals His heart to us. When He reveals His heart to us, our response is to love Him more. To love Him more is to share Him with others.

This Christmas season, remember your true identity. You are His Golden Lampstand. Rise tall with His Legacy at your back, His Word in your heart, and His Gospel on your lips. Shine bright as you carry our Savior with all dignity, kindness, and grace.

From one Lampstand to another, Sandy McElfresh

Christ is Come



But the angel said to them,
*'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.
Today, in the town of David,
a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.*

This will be a sign to you:
'You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'
Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel,
praising God and saying, *'Glory to God in the highest,
and on Earth PEACE to men on whom his favor rests'* - Luke 2: 10-14

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,
but have everlasting life.
For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world;
but that the world through him might be saved. - John 3:16-17*

Today we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. For over a thousand years, the promised Messiah's entry into the world was anticipated, but no one knew when. It was not until He fulfilled His mission that we fully realized who He was and what He had done. He paid the price for our sin with His own life.

But why? Why did God want to send His only begotten Son? God created us in His image, so we might have a close, loving relationship with Him. He longs for us to love Him as He loves us. But our sin separated us from God who is holy. To fulfill His plan to save us from death (eternal separation from God), He sent His Son to die for us instead. Jesus redeemed us. That's how much God loves us. Jesus came not to condemn us for our sin, but instead, to save us. Now, the Holy Spirit lives within us and we await, anticipating the day Jesus will call us to our eternal home.

In 2010 a volcano erupted in Iceland, and we were stranded in Istanbul Turkey, once a center of Christianity (Constantinople). Each day we would anticipate getting home, but the airlines kept saying 'call back tomorrow'. Day after day we called, anticipating a flight home. We longed for our family, friends, and the beauty of the York River. Finally on the fourth day, we flew from Istanbul to Frankfurt Germany. But our flight home was not to come that day. Instead, we continued to call the airlines anticipating a flight home. After four more days, we finally booked a flight back to the good old USA. After several weeks in foreign countries, the joy of coming home was immeasurable. But that homecoming pales in comparison to what God has in store for us.

Celebrate God's greatest gift this day and share the good news that Jesus came to save the world, not condemn it.

Jesus will come again one day, to judge the living and the dead. We must anticipate and be prepared for His second coming. On that day, Jesus will call Christians up to our new home in heaven, to live with Him for eternity. May the '*Joy of Anticipation*' for that homecoming guide your life today and tomorrow.

Merry Christmas,
Keith and Leslie Belvin

Opportunities for Involvement, Service, and Worship

Gloucester Point Baptist Church

7741 Terrapin Cove Road (P. O. Box 305), Gloucester Point, VA 23062

Phone: 804-642-2555 <http://www.gloptbaptist.org/>

November 27 **First Sunday of Advent**

11:00 AM Worship – Hanging of the Greens

November 30 6:00-7:30 PM Children’s Advent Bible School (Preschool – 5th)

December 4 **Second Sunday of Advent**

11:00 AM Worship – The Lord’s Supper

December 7 6:00-7:30 PM Children’s Advent Bible School (Preschool – 5th)

December 11 **Third Sunday of Advent**

11:00 AM Worship / Cantata – Adult Choir

12:00 PM Christmas Dinner

December 14 6:00-7:30 PM Children’s Advent Bible School (Preschool – 5th)

December 18 **Fourth Sunday of Advent**

11:00 AM Worship - Children’s Program

December 21 6:00-7:30 PM Children’s Advent Birthday Party for Jesus

December 24 **Christmas Eve**

5:00 PM Christmas Eve Service

December 25 **Christmas Day**

11:00 AM Worship

- Gloucester Point Baptist Church invites you to join us each Sunday at 9:45 AM for Sunday School and at 11:00 AM for Worship.
- Call or text Connie Stewart (804-815-7832), Children and Youth Coordinator, for a complete schedule of children and youth activities.